



News Release

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PG&E and State Parks Encourage Water Enthusiasts to Adapt to the Effects of the Drought

SACRAMENTO, Calif.— California State Parks Division of Boating and Waterways (DBW) and Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) are warning water enthusiasts not to become complacent because of the drought, and to take serious precautions when in or near water this spring and summer.

Water is still flowing and even low reservoirs and lakes still have enough water for recreation. Previously deep hazards may be closer to the surface and can create treacherous conditions for all recreationists – waders, swimmers, paddlers, boaters, anglers, and even hikers cooling off at the water's edge.

"We ask those enjoying the outdoors to be careful near mountain streams, rivers and reservoirs. Water flows can fluctuate so always be prepared for a change in conditions," said Randy Livingston, vice president of power generation for PG&E.

"Low water levels can give a false sense of confidence to boaters," said Lisa Mangat, Director of California State Parks. "Hazards, such as underwater trees, snags, and sandbars, that were previously deep underwater are still hidden but now are in the direct path of boaters. It is critical to not only adjust your boating activities, but to always wear properly-fitted life jackets, even if on familiar waters."

"The month of May traditionally marks the beginning of boating season in California," said Colonel Chris Conlin, USMC (Ret), DBW's Acting Deputy Director. "As we enjoy getting back out on and in the water, it is critical that we exercise extra caution and awareness, especially if venturing into unfamiliar waterways, or areas impacted by the drought. Have fun, but please stay safe."

Below are some water safety tips:

Know the Water

- Sudden immersion in [cold water](#) can stimulate the "gasp reflex," causing an involuntary inhalation of air or water. It can even trigger cardiac arrest, temporary paralysis, hypothermia and drowning. When faced with swift water, even the strongest swimmers may be easily overwhelmed.



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- Cold water entering the ear canal can cause vertigo and disorientation. This may confuse swimmers, causing them to venture deeper into the water.
- Recreating in PG&E canals and flumes is strictly prohibited. Stay out of canals and flumes, which are very dangerous due to slippery sides and fast moving water.
- Lower lakes and rivers can expose hazards like rocks and trees, or make them closer to the surface.

Know your Limits

- Swimming in open water is more difficult than in a swimming pool – people tire more quickly and can get into trouble.
- Cold water causes impairment leading to fatalities. It reduces body heat 25 to 30 times faster than air does at the same temperature.
- Many unseen obstacles can be lurking below the water's surface- this is especially the case during ongoing drought conditions. Swift water can make these obstacles even more treacherous. Guided trips for inexperienced paddlers are recommended.

Wear a Life Jacket

- Conditions change quickly in open water and even the best swimmers can misjudge the water and their skills when boating or swimming. Wearing a properly-fitted life jacket can increase survival time.
- A life jacket can also provide some thermal protection against the onset of hypothermia and keep you afloat until someone else can rescue you.

Parental Supervision

- Actively supervise children in and around open bodies of water, giving them your undivided attention. Appoint a designated “water watcher,” taking turns with other adults.
- Teach children that swimming in open water is not the same as swimming in a pool: they need to be aware of uneven surfaces, river currents, ocean undertow and changing weather.

Know the Law

- Every child under 13 must wear a Coast Guard-approved life jacket when on a moving vessel that is 26 feet or less in length.
- A Coast Guard-approved life jacket must be carried for each person on board a boat. This includes rigid or inflatable paddlecraft.
- Every person on board a personal watercraft (popularly known as “jet skis”) and any person being towed behind a vessel must wear a Coast Guard-approved life jacket.
- It is against the law to operate a boat or water ski with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of 0.08 percent or more. You can be arrested even when your BAC is less than 0.08 percent if conditions are deemed to be unsafe.

For more water safety information, please visit www.WearItCalifornia.com

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For more than two years, California has been dealing with the effects of drought. To learn about all the actions the state has taken to manage our water system and cope with the impacts of the drought, visit Drought.CA.Gov.

Every Californian should take steps to conserve water. Find out how at SaveOurWater.com.



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To provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high quality outdoor recreation.



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